



# Doorways to waste

## Teacher preparation

**Overarching learning goal:** Students are given a worksheet showing three era's from the past and one from the future showing the changes in the ways that people have used materials and disposed of their waste over the past 400 years. They are asked to colour in the drawings and complete the drawing for the future scene and predict the types of waste disposal that will be available in the future.

**Teacher content information:** The amount of waste that humans have produced has changed radically over the past 400 years, particularly in Australia.

Indigenous Australians used only natural materials for all their needs, while European settlers introduced artificial materials and manufacturing techniques that changed consumption patterns and associated waste. As artificial material needs have increased, so too have levels of waste. Where waste derived from natural materials (as used by Aboriginals) has a rapid decomposition rate with minimal environmental impact, waste associated with high levels of manufacturing and artificial materials has slower rates of decomposition and higher levels of environmental damage.



## Student and classroom organisation:

**Step 1:** Ask the students what the Australian aboriginals needed to hunt, keep warm, gather food, build shelters and make tools and weapons. Consider the following questions (*suggested answers included*):



- Where did they get these things? *From the plants, animals and earth around them. All the products that they used were made from natural materials that were (mostly) readily available to them.*
- If things broke or wore out, what did they do with them? *Many things that were broken could be mended or turned into new items. However, because all their items were made from natural materials, items that did need to be thrown away would decompose quickly and wouldn't leave behind litter or pollution.*
- What did they eat? *They ate a wide range of fresh plants and animals.*
- Where did these things come from? *Aboriginal people ate things that grew and lived naturally on the lands that they lived in and in the waters they lived close to. They did not farm vegetables or animals or have factories to produce food.*
- What do you think they would have done with bones, uneaten food and shells, etc.? *In some cases, they would have burnt and buried this waste, but there is a lot of evidence that Aboriginal people disposed of their waste in mounds called 'middens'. Any waste that was made up of plants or meat would have just rotted away.*

**Step 2.** Repeat these questions but this time in the context of modern-day society. For example (*suggested answers included*):

- Where do we get all the things that we eat, live in, wear and use? *Almost everything we eat, live in and wear has been made out of something by someone else.*
- If things break or wear out, what do we do with them? *Most of the time we throw things away, often we try to reuse and recycle them or parts of them.*



- What do we eat? *We eat all sorts of food; some fresh, some processed, some natural and some artificial.*
- What do we do with our food waste? *Most of our food waste gets thrown in the bin and sent to landfill. Some food waste goes into compost or worm bins.*

**Step 3.** Draw a chart on the board, showing the differences suggested by the students.

**Step 4:** Explain to the students that they are to complete an activity that will ask them to compare how our lives in Australia have changed over the past 400 years and to guess what life will be like in the year 2050. Give each student a copy of the student worksheet *Doorways to waste*. Alternatively ask students to use their own drawings and create their own worksheets.

Students will need to:

- Cut out their four doors from the first page and glue the flaps to the four drawings on the second page.
- Complete their drawing for the time 2050, showing how we will be disposing of waste at that time.
- Draw three common types of waste for each era in each picture.
- Colour in their four drawings.

## Assessment/Reflection

**Step 1.** Once students have completed their worksheets, ask them to share their worksheets and talk about what homes might be like, what kinds of waste we'll see in the future and how this waste might be disposed of.

**Step 2.** Ask students to complete the second student worksheet.



## Homework and Extension

- 1.** Interested students could research different periods - such as 1700 or 1950 - to find out more about what life was like and how people dealt with their waste during those times.
- 2.** Students could build dioramas of the four snapshots of time.
- 3.** Students take their artwork home and discuss it with their parents and grandparents. They could add further details to the four drawings.
- 4.** Invite a teacher or a grandparent who lived during the 1950s to talk to the students about what they remember about this time. Some questions to get them started:
  - What foods did they eat?
  - How did they do their shopping?
  - Did they grow much of their own food?
  - How did they get rid of their waste?

Students can prepare questions before the talk and ask them afterwards.